

A Brief History of ARIZONA LEARNS

Vision to Reality

The development of Arizona's system of school accountability can best be described as a process of evolution. Although several adjustments have been made to ARIZONA LEARNS in recent months, both legislatively and methodologically, it should be noted that these alterations serve to further the core focus of Arizona's system of school accountability—purposeful accountability founded on the principles of accuracy and fairness. In emphasizing the concept of purposeful accountability, the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) fully acknowledges that a system of school accountability is only as strong as the accompanying system of school improvement. Recently, the ADE has made great strides in developing and implementing a strong system of school improvement that includes technical assistance and increased resources and professional development opportunities for educators to better serve our communities, our schools, and most importantly, our students.

Education 2000/Proposition 301

In examining the history of Arizona's system of school accountability, it is clear to see that ARIZONA LEARNS was born out of the public's desire to provide increased resources to our public schools. In 2000, the Legislature and Governor Jane Hull adopted legislation known as Education 2000 that was forwarded, in part, to the general electorate and approved as Proposition 301. Education 2000/Proposition 301 set forth a six-tenths of a percent sales tax increase for purposes relating to education, including new accountability measures and additional funds for school districts and charter schools. The revenue created by Education 2000/Proposition 301 is to be used for the following purposes:

- To authorize and pay for issuance of up to \$800 million of new school improvement revenue bonds to correct existing deficiencies in school buildings. At six percent interest, total principal and debt service will be approximately \$1.4 billion over the next 20 years.
- For distribution to the ADE for the phase-in of five additional school days and associated teacher salary increases resulting from an increase in school days.

- For distribution to the ADE for school safety and character education.
- For reimbursement of the state general fund for the cost of income tax credits in mitigation of increased transaction privileges and to use taxes for families with an annual income of less than \$25,000 and individuals with an annual income of less than \$12,500.
- For distribution to the failing schools tutoring fund.
- For distribution to the ADE to develop:
 - 1) A system to measure school performance based on student achievement, including student performance on the Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) test; and
 - 2) A statewide computerized database of information on individual students including student attendance and academic performance. Data items collected on individual students will be developed at the discretion of the ADE.

With these increased resources, however, came the call for greater school accountability from various stakeholders including lawmakers, business leaders, educators, and parents. As a result, school Achievement Profiles were established as part of the accountability measures to determine a standard measurement of acceptable student progress and a school classification for each school in the state (Laws 2000, 44th Legislature, Fifth Special Session, Chapter 1). Many of the accountability measures established in Education 2000/Proposition 301 lacked long-term feasibility and needed to be strengthened with further legislation. This need provided the catalyst for A.R.S. §15-241 (ARIZONA LEARNS).

ARIZONA LEARNS

In 2002, the Legislature passed A.R.S. §15-241 (ARIZONA LEARNS). The passage of ARIZONA LEARNS fulfilled the promise of Education 2000/Proposition 301 by mandating a research-based method of evaluation to effectively measure school performance. Serving as the research-based method of school evaluation, the Achievement Profile is the cornerstone of Arizona's system of school accountability. The original Achievement Profile established in 2002 for elementary and secondary schools was used to determine a school classification that

designated each public school as one of the following: 1) *Excelling*; 2) *Improving*; 3) *Maintaining*; 4) *Underperforming*; and 5) *Failing to Meet Academic Standards*. The first public release of the Achievement Profile occurred on October 15, 2002.

ARIZONA LEARNS also identified data sets for gauging school performance. The 2002 Achievement Profile for elementary schools (i.e., kindergarten through eighth grades, or any combination of these grades) consisted of two academic indicators. The first and primary indicator on the elementary Achievement Profile was student performance on AIMS. AIMS student performance data were analyzed using a three-year rolling average in order to effectively measure student achievement trends rather than anomalies in AIMS data. Using AIMS results, the ADE computed the percentage of students who met or exceeded Arizona's Academic Standards.

The second academic indicator of the 2002 Achievement Profile for elementary schools was the Arizona Measure of Academic Progress (MAP). Using results from the Stanford 9 Achievement Test (SAT9), the ADE computed the percentage of students enrolled in a particular school for at least one academic year who had achieved one year of academic progress. MAP provided additional evidence during the 2002 Achievement Profile calculation.

Like the elementary school Achievement Profile, the first and primary indicator for the 2002 Achievement Profile for secondary schools was student performance on AIMS. Additionally, as mandated by A.R.S. §15-241, graduation and dropout rates served as indicators for the secondary school Achievement Profile.

The true benefit of ARIZONA LEARNS lies in the commitment to school improvement. A.R.S. §15-241 established a timeline and a set of associated consequences for schools designated as *Underperforming* or *Failing*. The consequences associated with these classifications include, but are not limited to the following:

- Development of a school improvement plan;
- Presentation of the school improvement plan to the public;

- Development and dissemination of written notice to each residence within the attendance area of the school; and
- Possible restructuring or alternate governance/operation of the school if the school is found to be negligent in the implementation of the school improvement process.

ARIZONA LEARNS also places responsibility on the ADE to assist schools during the improvement process. These responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Development and implementation of solutions teams designed to provide technical assistance to schools; and
- Disbursement of alternate tutoring monies as established by Proposition 301.

Despite the benefits associated with ARIZONA LEARNS, several problems plagued the statute, including what many stakeholders deemed as an unreasonable timeline for school improvement. Once again, the long-term feasibility of the state's school accountability system was threatened.

Putting the Pieces Together in 2003

In January 2003, under the leadership of Tom Horne, the newly elected Superintendent of Public Instruction, the ADE submitted House Bill 2277 amending A.R.S. §15-241. Passed by the Legislature and signed by Governor Janet Napolitano in May 2003, House Bill 2277 provides the following changes:

- 1) Schools that are designated as *Underperforming* for three consecutive years face the possibility of being classified as *Failing to Meet Academic Standards*. Before the passage of House Bill 2277, any school designated as *Underperforming* for two consecutive years was automatically classified as a school *Failing to Meet Academic Standards*, regardless of the findings of the mandatory site-review team. Under House Bill 2277, if a school remains *Underperforming* for three consecutive years, the ADE must visit the school and review its plan for improvement. Additionally, the school will be labeled *Failing to Meet Academic Standards*, unless an alternate classification is made. This delay benefits schools in two ways. First, it gives schools the opportunity to effectively implement the school

improvement plan and demonstrate progress. Second, it gives the ADE an opportunity to provide assistance to schools in need of improvement.

- 2) Modifications were made to the Achievement Profile classifications. With the passage of House Bill 2277, the ambiguous classifications of *Improving* and *Maintaining* are no longer applicable. The Achievement Profile will be used to determine a school classification that designates each public school as *Excelling*, *Highly Performing*, *Performing*, *Underperforming*, or *Failing to Meet Academic Standards*. These new classifications are designed to place greater focus and recognition on the positive achievement demonstrated by schools.
- 3) The ADE must establish an appeals process for school leaders to appeal data used to determine the Achievement Profile for schools. These criteria must be based on mitigating factors and may warrant a visit to the school by the ADE.
- 4) The ADE, based on need, will assign a solutions team to an *Underperforming* school or a school *Failing to Meet Academic Standards*. This provision furthers the ADE's goal to provide better service and increased resources to Arizona schools. The solutions team is comprised of master teachers, fiscal analysts, and curriculum assessment experts who are certified by the Arizona State Board of Education as Arizona Academic Standards Technicians. The ADE may hire or contract with administrators, principals, and teachers who have demonstrated experience with the specific characteristics of and situations which may occur in schools designated as *Failing to Meet Academic Standards*. The ADE may also use these personnel as part of the solutions team.
- 5) Students attending a school designated as *Underperforming* or *Failing to Meet Academic Standards* are to have access to alternative tutoring programs by certified providers.
- 6) If the Arizona State Board of Education has determined that a full or partial change in management of a school is necessary, the Arizona State Board of Education must meet with the school district governing board to determine the timeframe, operational considerations, and appropriate continuation of

existing improvements prior to the board making the determination to return management of the school to the school district.

- 7) House Bill 2277 removes the definition of an *Excelling* school from A.R.S. §15-241. The removal of the *Excelling* definition provides greater consistency in the state's accountability system by allowing the ADE the flexibility to determine the criteria required to designate *Excelling* schools.

In addition to the legislative amendments made to A.R.S. §15-241, under House Bill 2277, several methodological changes were submitted by the ADE and subsequently approved by the State Board of Education. Like the legislative amendments, these methodological changes serve to strengthen the principles of accuracy and fairness on which Arizona's system of school accountability is founded. Some of the methodological changes include, but are not limited to:

- The number of students applied in the Achievement Profile analysis (N-count) has increased to 30 students per subject/grade combination. The 2002 Achievement Profile model applied an N-count of 16 students per subject/grade combination.
- Students not enrolled for a full academic year (i.e., determined within the first ten days of school, lasting through the administration date of AIMS) in a particular school will not be included in the Achievement Profile analysis. Schools are now held responsible for only those students that the school has had the opportunity to teach. (The 2002 Achievement Profile model included these students in the analysis.)
- The value placed on MAP has increased significantly. Both MAP and AIMS are now the primary indicators on the elementary school Achievement Profile. MAP will benefit schools by providing additional points for the 2003 Achievement Profile. The greater emphasis placed on MAP in the Achievement Profile serves to benefit well-run schools located in low-income neighborhoods.

Furthermore, in recognizing that the current ARIZONA LEARNS model does not offer incentives for schools to increase the academic achievement of students who score at the

proficient level (i.e., *Meets the Standards*), the ADE is presently developing a methodology that will provide incentives to schools demonstrating an increase in the absolute academic achievement levels of average and above average students.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT OF 2001

Several modifications made to Arizona's system of school accountability involved the incorporation of accountability requirements mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). These modifications include, but are not limited to:

- Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), as defined by NCLB, is incorporated into the elementary and secondary school Achievement Profile as an academic indicator. According to NCLB, a school makes AYP if the following conditions are met:
 - 1) The school must assess 95 percent of the total enrolled student population as well as 95 percent of each disaggregated student group (i.e., major racial/ethnic groups, students with disabilities, English language learners, and economically disadvantaged students) using the state mandated assessment (AIMS);
 - 2) The school must meet the state's annual target percentage of students demonstrating proficiency in Arizona's Academic Standards on the state mandated assessment (AIMS) in the subject areas of reading and mathematics. Progress is to be made in a predetermined manner toward 100 percent student proficiency by the end of the 2013-2014 academic year;
 - 3) The school must meet the target attendance rate or demonstrate improvement (elementary schools only); and
 - 4) The school must meet the target graduation rate or demonstrate improvement (secondary schools only).
- AYP determinations will no longer be based on the Achievement Profile classification. According to the 2002 Achievement Profile model, a school designated as *Excelling*, *Improving*, or *Maintaining* was deemed to have made AYP. A school designated as *Underperforming*, however, was deemed to have *not* made AYP. Beginning in the

2002-2003 academic year, AYP determinations will be based on the requirements mandated by NCLB.

- Title I schools designated as *Underperforming* will not automatically be placed in federal school improvement. Instead, the ADE will follow the requirements mandated by NCLB, which stipulate that a Title I school must fail to make AYP for two consecutive years before being identified for federal school improvement. Under the 2002 Achievement Profile model, a Title I school that did not make AYP (based on a designation as *Underperforming* on the 2002 Achievement Profile) for the first time was automatically placed in federal school improvement.

The ADE will continue to review Arizona's system of school accountability in order to ensure that ARIZONA LEARNS provides a fair and accurate evaluation of school performance. Furthermore, the ADE will implement a strong system of school improvement that will provide schools the encouragement and support needed to help *all* students, regardless of condition or circumstance, reach their full potential.